and 8.7.1997. The matter was also discussed in the meeting of the Inter-State Council held on 17.7.1997. However, no consensus could be arrived at in these meetings. In the meeting of the Inter-State Council it was suggested by the Prime Minister that the matter should be further considered by the Standing Committee and brought before the Inter-State Council in due course. There is no proposal under the consideration of the Government to introduce a Bill, suo moto, to amend article 356 of the Constitution of India.

Handicrafts marketing and service extension centres

*309. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of new Handicrafts Marketing and Service Extention Centres proposed to be set up; and

(b) by when they would start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) and (b) The Government proposes to set up new Handicrafts Marketing and Service Extension Centres at Aizwal, Baroda or Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Trivendrum and Varanasi. The starting of these centres is dependent upon the receipt of all the required approvals.

Firing by Pak-Troops

*310. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether frequent, intermittent and indiscriminate firing by Pak-troops along the international borders in Kashmir and elsewhere have led to hundreds of acres of agricultural land lying uncultivated and uninhabited for years together;

(b) if so, the total estimated cultivable and residential area so lying vacant and rendered into fallow land; and

(c) what effective steps have been and are being taken to bring this area into proper use?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) and (b) Farmers are generally able to cultivate their land on the International Border at most places. However, in some areas of Jammu, there were reports of land remaining uncultivated due to firing by Pakistani troops. In order to assess the problem faced by the people in these border villages, a team of officers from the Ministry of Agriculture was sent to J&K in October 1997. The team reported that 1671 hectares of land in Jammu & Kathua Districts had remained uncultivated due to firing.

(c) Border Secruity Force deployed along International Border in J&K are providing necessary protection to the farmers in their agricultural pursuits along the international borders.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Bihar

*311. DR. JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be plesed to state:

(a) the details of target set and achievements made under the major poverty alleviation programmes in Bihar during the last three years; and

(b) the specific steps taken to ensure fulfilment of targets in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OR RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL): (a) The major poverty alleviation programmes of the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment are (i) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), (ii) Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), (iii) Million Wells Scheme (MWS), (iv) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), (v) Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and (vi) Indira Awaas yojana (IAY). The physical and financial target and achievements under